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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 005581

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/09/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [GAZA](#) [DISENGAGEMENT](#)

SUBJECT: PEACE NOW ANALYZES THE DISENGAGEMENT PROCESS

REF: TEL AVIV 4471

Classified By: Economic Counselor William Weinstein for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

This cable has been cleared by Consulate General Jerusalem

1. (C) Summary: Yariv Oppenheimer, Secretary General of Peace Now, said that the disengagement from the Gaza Strip had gone very well, and in particular praised the IDF soldiers and the police for the way in which they negotiated with settlers throughout the evacuations. He said that he had faith that if the IDF were given an order to dismantle an outpost in the future, the soldiers would be capable of carrying out the order. He was disappointed, however, that the media focused so much on disengagement opponents, without reporting on those who left peacefully, and blamed the level of violence on West Bank youth who "had nothing better to do." Oppenheimer also said the Disengagement Authority should not have publicized the negotiations it held with settlers prior to the evacuations. Oppenheimer reported that Peace Now won its petition in the High Court for the IDF to dismantle permanent construction in Amona outpost, but is seeking further clarification on the deadline for the dismantlement because the IDF has not taken any action to date. End summary.

Media Coverage Unbalanced

2. (C) Yariv Oppenheimer, Secretary General of Peace Now, told econoff on August 31 that disengagement had gone very well. He said that he first feared that extensive press coverage of disengagement opponents would weaken public support for the evacuations. He was disappointed that the press focused on the resistance and hardly reported on the settlers who evacuated peacefully, but was pleased that the public supported the operation until the end, noting that some polls even showed increases in support as the evacuations were carried out.

Praise for the Security Forces

3. (C) Oppenheimer praised the soldiers and police who carried out the evacuations. He explained that they did well by first negotiating, and only later physically evacuating settlers. He commented that he now trusted the Israeli security forces much more than before. He said that he had faith that if the IDF were given an order to dismantle an outpost in the future, the soldiers would be capable of carrying out the order. Oppenheimer stressed that he was happy to see that soldiers followed their orders, with few exceptions, regardless of their personal views on disengagement.

West Bank Youth, Not Settlers, Caused Problems

4. (C) Oppenheimer said that the Gaza settlers behaved reasonably well. He noted that even if some had to be physically carried out by soldiers, they were not as violent as many had predicted. He blamed most of the violence on the "hilltop youth" from the West Bank who threw paint thinner and eggs on soldiers, and barricaded themselves inside buildings. He asserted that most were there because "they had nothing better to do," and claimed that they received financial support from the YESHA council to go to Gaza. He said that the evacuations would have looked different had they taken place after the start of the school year. Oppenheimer also compared the protests to his experiences as an activist in the Labor Youth movement, and said that "they mostly just had fun" and that "it was a blast to stage protests and demonstrations."

SELA Needs a PR Lesson

5. (C) Oppenheimer took issue with the fact that the Disengagement Authority (SELA) publicized the private negotiations it had with settlers who approached the GOI on compensation and relocation prior to the start of

disengagement. He explained that it is difficult to keep secrets in tight-knit settlement communities, and that the

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publicity may have discouraged others from coming forward to negotiate.

Amona Outpost

16. (C) Oppenheimer reported that Peace Now in early August won its petition in the High Court against Amona outpost, east of Ofra settlement near Ramallah (reftel). The High Court ordered the IDF to demolish the nine permanent structures in the outpost, according to Oppenheimer, but did not specify a deadline for the dismantlement. Oppenheimer said he would seek further clarification from the Court because the IDF has not taken any action against Amona to date.

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